Accessing Employment and Employment Support Services in Hamilton: Issues and Barriers for Persons with Disabilities

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Most people at some point in their lives will be at least temporarily disabled. Further, no one can escape the possibility that they will become permanently disabled due to an accident or illness. All people, therefore, have a stake in making sure that the appropriate social supports are in place to maintain a life of dignity for persons with disabilities. For many, this will include the opportunity to work at a job suited to their abilities and interests.

Under contract with the Ministry of Community and Social Services - Ontario Disability Supports Program (ODSP) - Employment Supports Program, the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) conducted a study to understand some of the issues and circumstances faced by persons with disabilities in our community. Consistent with the focus of the ODSP Employment Support Program, the study has a specific focus on employment and employment support services.

During the course of the study, which began is September 2000, the SPRC worked closely with the ODSP Employment Supports Transition Committee, providing updates and receiving feedback and direction. This committee was comprised of representatives from the ODSP, as well as ODSP transfer payment agencies that provide employment support programs and services locally (see appendix for al list of agencies). The committee was particularly interested in understanding that segment of the population of persons with disabilities who:

a) are not currently employed;
b) who are willing and able to work for pay or profit and, therefore, who may need, or be interested in, the assistance of specialized employment support services; and,
c) who are not currently accessing these services.

This segment of the population of persons with disabilities defines what we will refer to as a "hidden" population. Through our analysis we will attempt to better understand this hidden population, as well as the barriers to accessing employment and employment services they may face.

In terms of research design, the study incorporates a number of sources and methods of information gathering, including a review of local, provincial and national level research, Statistics Canada Census Data, a local survey and a series of one-on-one interviews. Using a process of correlating data and information from several sources increases both the

reliability and validity of findings. Specifically, the following sources were used to conduct our analysis:

- Literature related to employment and employment support services for persons with disabilities
- Statistics Canada's 1996 Census
- Gail Fawcett's analysis of hidden populations based on Statistics Canada's 1991 Health and Activity Limitation Survey (HALS)
- Findings from a survey of persons with disabilities, conducted through Workable Services Inc.
- Findings from key informant interviews with local professionals involved in supporting persons with disabilities
- Findings from key informant interviews with consumers and potential consumers of employment support services for persons with disabilities

Subsequent sections of this report will provide an analysis of findings from specific sources. To help the reader to better understand and interpret these findings, the following section "Defining and Classifying Disabilities" describes how the term "disability" is defined for the purposes of this study. The report concludes with a summary of key findings and a set of recommendations based on these findings.

2.0 DEFINING AND CLASSIFYING DISABILITIES

Classifying disabilities has always been necessary for researchers, planners, government ministries and service providers in their efforts to understand and support individuals in coping with activity limitations. Many different classifications of disability have been devised for different purposes, such as collecting demographic information on persons with disabilities, for deciding who is eligible for social support and the degree of support, as well as for devising social policy and legislation.

Through an analysis of various models and classification systems, the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps (ICIDH) stands out as being both comprehensive and inclusive. The ICIDH, developed by the World Health Organization (WHO), distinguishes "disabilities" from "impairments" and "handicaps" in the following terms:

> ***Impairment*** refers to any damage to, loss of, or anomaly in, body functions or structures.
>
> ***Disability*** refers to an activity limitation that is the result of an impairment.
>
> ***Handicap*** refers to any societal disadvantage for a person that limits or prevents that person from participating in one or another facet of social life.

Impairments

Impairments can be (a) temporary or permanent, (b) progressive, regressive, or static, (c) episodic or continuous. Impairments may be more or less severe, the severity of which may fluctuate over time. Impairments, furthermore, may be visible or non-visible.

Handicaps

Handicaps may be usefully described in terms of the existence of barriers or the lack of appropriate supports to participation in social life. The WHO defines "barriers" as:

> "Environmental factors in a person's environment that, through their absence or presence, limit functioning and create disability. These include aspects such as a physical environment that is inaccessible, lack of relevant assistive technology, negative attitudes of people towards disability, as well as services, systems and policies that are either nonexistent or that hinder the involvement of all people with a health condition in all areas of life" (ICIDH-2).

"Supports" might then be defined as:

> Environmental factors that through their absence or presence enhance functioning and create ability. These include aspects such as a physical environment that is accessible, availability of the appropriate assistive technology, supportive attitudes of people towards disability, as well as services, systems and policies that exist or that promote involvement of all people in all areas of life.

There is no necessary connection between "Impairments," "Disabilities," and "Handicaps." "Impairments," Disabilities," and "Handicaps" may exist independently of one another and are thus conceptually distinct. For instance, a person may be handicapped if they are discriminated against because they are perceived to have an impairment, even when they have no impairment. In an article entitled "Disability and Equality," Jerome Bickenbach provides the following example.

> Suppose I am denied an apartment because the landlord thinks I have AIDS (when in fact I do not). Were I HIV serio-positive I would have an Impairment, and would eventually have a collection of Disabilities as well; and if I were denied the apartment for these reasons, then I would have a Handicap. But if I am falsely believed to have AIDS, and denied an apartment on that ground, I still have a Handicap, since I am still disadvantaged because of someone's perception of my physical state (Bickenbach, "Disability and Equality," 287).

The point is that having a disability, or facing a handicap, is a function of the physical and social circumstances in which one lives; "each aspect of disability interacts with the background social and physical context in which the person lives, and it is the interaction, not just the physical or mental condition, that yields Disabilities and Handicaps" (Bickenbach, 287). A person who must wear eyeglasses to see properly, for example, is visually impaired. This visual impairment, however, need not result in disability if the appropriate assistive technology—corrective eyeglasses—are affordable and readily available. Further, a visual impairment, correctable by eyeglasses, need not result in a handicap if social attitudes towards people who wear eyeglasses do not hinder their involvement in the social life of their community.

Though Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps may be conceptually distinct, practically speaking, for most people with a disability due to an impairment, the impairment, the resulting functional limitations, and handicaps are closely interrelated. For a person who suffers severe depression, for instance, the barriers to participation in meaningful employment that they must face constitute handicaps that may end up increasing the

severity of the impairment, and the resulting disability. Similarly, providing supports, such as an assistive device, may increase a person's functional capacities and thus their ability to participate in the social life of their community.

2.1 Defining Disability

The definition of disability that is used by the ODSP to determine eligibility for Employment Supports reads as follows. A person has a ***disability*** if:

(a) The person has a physical or mental impairment that is continuous or recurrent and expected to last one year or more and that represents a substantial barrier to competitive employment; and
(b) The fact that clause (a) applies to the person has been verified by a person with the prescribed qualifications.

According to the WHO, a disability that is the result of an impairment may substantially limit the employment opportunities of an individual, in limiting the kinds of jobs that a person can do. What the WHO makes clear however, is that impairments are only one factor that limit the employment opportunities of persons with disabilities. Other environmental factors that were earlier defined as "barriers" also limit the employment opportunities of persons with disabilities, including such things as:

a) a physical environment that is inaccessible
b) lack of the appropriate assistive technologies
c) negative attitudes of people towards disability
d) services, systems and policies that are either non-existent, or that hinder the involvement of individuals with a disability in meaningful employment.

Our analysis of information and data collected over the course of this study acknowledges the existence of such environmental factors. By acknowledging these factors, we acknowledge the responsibilities of the broader community in addressing barriers often experienced by persons with disabilities.

3.0 IDENTIFYING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Barriers to employment refer to features in the physical or social environment of people with a disability that hinder equal access to employment opportunities in jobs that they are capable of doing. These barriers also affect ones ability or likelihood of participating in employment support programs.

Through a process of reviewing literature related to employment and employment service usage among persons with disabilities, a series of themes began to emerge. While the list of identified issues was lengthy, five specific barriers were consistently identified across local, provincial and national level research. These include a lack of information on training and employment opportunities, transportation issues, financial disincentives, negative attitudes, and physical accessibility.

This section of the report will focus on each of five most substantial barriers to employment and employment services faced by persons with disabilities.

3.1 Lack of Information

A lack of information on employment and training opportunities is consistently cited in related literature as a barrier for persons with disabilities. With respect to training or employment support, individuals often learn about such programs and services through informal sources such as physicians or health care worker who know of their existence.

In most jurisdictions, including Hamilton, there is no central repository of information on the full range of employment supports available to persons with disabilities.

3.2 Transportation Issues

While a lack of accessible and reliable transportation has been identified as an issue in Hamilton, a review of related literature suggests that this is not just a local issue. Provincial and national level research also identifies inadequate transportation as a barrier to employment for persons with disabilities.

Transportation issues are present at several points in process of securing and maintaining employment. Inadequate transportation may result in barriers to job search activities, attending training programs, and to simply maintaining a regular work schedule.

Personal vehicles are expensive to own, and may not be an option for those with a certain types of disabilities. Public transportation, with disabled access, is not available in all

areas or operates on a limited schedule. Individuals feel somewhat constrained by the fact that specialized transportation services require that you book days in advance.

3.3 Financial Disincentives

Related literature identifies two specific financial disincentives faced by persons with disabilities who are considering moving from some form of income maintenance program to the labour force.

While there is evidence that the ODSP, through recent policy changes, has made the transition on and off income supports much simpler for recipients, there is still a perceived risk in leaving support for employment. If an individual accepts an employment opportunity, they are most often cut off from income supports. If, for whatever reason, the job does not last, that individual must reapply for income supports. For some programs, this may involve a delay during which the individual has no income to meet their daily needs.

A second financial disincentive, particularly for persons who require a high level of care, is that earned income may not be sufficient to meet their daily needs. Income maintenance programs generally provide comprehensive health care benefits, sometimes not found in the labour market. If an individual can not meet their needs through employment income and benefits, there is little to no incentive to leave an income maintenance program.

3.4 Negative Attitudes

Negative attitudes sometimes held by employers are often a result of stereotypes and misconceptions. Throughout related literature, it is suggested that employers often make assumptions about people with disabilities without giving them a chance to prove their skills. It is often assumed by employers that persons with disabilities will cost more to train, produce less on the job and not have the capacity to accomplish their tasks. Employers, oftentimes, see disability as a problem that will cost them.

3.5 Accessibility

While provincial and national standards have been successful in increasing the level of accessibility in public areas, related literature still identifies accessibility as a substantial barrier to employment for persons with disabilities. Studies have shown that people with disabilities who needed workplace accommodation, like wheelchair access or special computer equipment, were twice as likely to be unemployed in the late 1980s as those who did not require such accommodations (*"Canada's Untapped workplace resource - People with*

Disabilities"). According to Statistics Canada's 1991 Health and Activity Limitation Survey (HALS), almost fifty percent of persons with disabilities who were not in the labour force cited at least one environmental barrier as the reason that they were not looking for work.

As part of a broader analysis, connections will be made between barriers reported in literature, and those identified through an analysis of local demographics, a survey conducted through Workable Services Inc., and key informant interviews.

3.6 Key Findings

Following is a list of key findings from a review of literature related to employment barriers faced by persons with disabilities.

- The literature consistently identifies a lack of information about training and employment opportunities as a barrier to employment and access to employment support services for persons with disabilities.

- Reliable and accessible transportation is essential to securing and maintaining employment. Where this is not available, transportation becomes a significant barrier to employment.

- Financial Disincentives serve as a barrier to employment for persons with disabilities. There is a perceived risk in leaving income maintenance programs for employment, that one will have difficulty reestablishing income support if a job does not work out.

- Negative attitudes and misunderstanding on the part of employers is consistently identified in the literature as a barrier to employment for persons with disabilities.

- A lack of physical accessibility in the workplace, particularly among persons with mobility or agility limitations, results in significant barrier to employment for persons with disabilities.

4.0 LOCAL DEMOGRAPHICS ANALYSIS

This section of our report focuses exclusively on Statistics Canada's 1996 Census data. Although this data represents a snapshot of our community that is now five years old, census data is still our best source of information in terms of understanding general labour market trends and issues. All data sets reported in our analysis represent the regional boundaries of Hamilton-Wentworth. As a result of the January 2001 regional amalgamation, these same boundaries now represent the new city of Hamilton.

Census data identifies persons with disabilities as having an "activity limitation". During the census, individuals were asked to self identify the presence or absence of an activity limitation through a series of questions related to limitations at home, at school or work, and in other activities. Respondents were given the following definition and instructions:

An activity limitation:

> Refers to the limitation in the kind or amount of a person's activity because of a long-term physical condition, mental condition, or health condition.

Respondents were asked to:

> Include long-term physical conditions, mental conditions, health problems, disabilities or handicaps that have lasted or are expected to last six months or more. Measure the period from the time the condition or problem began.

Our analysis will consider the presence of a self-reported activity limitation in the context of labour force status. Census data provides an indication of labour force participation and employment rates, as well as income levels and sources. This will also help to identify the number of individuals, by age groups, who were not in the labour force in 1996, relative to the non activity limited population.

While valuable in establishing general trends and issues, census data does not show the characteristics of the "hidden population" of persons with disabilities, or those individuals not participating in the labour force. In the next chapter, "Identifying Hidden Populations", we will apply a separate analysis to our understanding of general trends, which will support our understanding of this group.

4.1 Labour Force Participation and Unemployment

Essentially, the target population for employment support services include individuals who are not participating in the labour force. The labour force participation rate refers to the number of individuals between the ages of fifteen and sixty-four who are either employed or unemployed as a percentage of the total population between these ages. In order to be considered "unemployed" by Statistics Canada, individuals must meet the following criteria:

During the week prior to Census Day, were without paid work, and were available for work, and:

a) had actively looked for work in the past four weeks;
b) were on temporary lay-off and expected to return to their job; or
c) had definite arrangements to start a new job in four weeks or less (Statistics Canada, 1996 Census Dictionary).

According to the 1996 census, a total of 34,935 individuals in Hamilton-Wentworth between the ages of fifteen and sixty-four, reported the presence of an activity limitation. Chart 1 shows labour force participation rates by ten year age groups, comparing those reporting an activity limitation with those who did not.

Chart 1: Labour Force Participation Rate By Age And Activity Limitation In Hamilton-Wentworth - 1996 Census Data

	Labour Force Participation Rate	
Age Group	With Activity Limitation	No Activity Limitation
15 to 64	40 % (14,100)	79% (212,774)
15 to 24	46% (1,280)	65% (36,615)
25 to 34	56% (2,700)	86% (57,820)
35 to 44	51% (4,060)	88% (58,070)
45 to 54	44% (3,930)	87% (42,235)
55 to 64	21% 2,130)	57% (18,035)

As we can see from CHART 1, those reporting an activity limitation had a much lower rate of participation in the labour force than those without an activity limitation. This is true across all ten-year age groups between 15 and 64. In total, among those 15 to 64 who reported an activity limitation, the participation rate was only 40%, compared to 79% among those without activity limitation.

In terms of unemployment (as defined above), an analysis was developed based again on age groups and comparing those reporting an activity limitation with those who did not.

Chart 2: Unemployment Rate By Age And Activity Limitation In Hamilton-Wentworth - 1996 Census Data

	Unemployment Rate	
Age Group	With Activity Limitation	No Activity Limitation
15 to 64	16 % (2,235)	9% (18,485)
15 to 24	30% (390)	18% (6,640)
25 to 34	18% (485)	9% (5,280)
35 to 44	16% (630)	6% (3,665)
45 to 54	13% (505)	5% (1,945)
55 to 64	11% (225)	5% (965)

CHART 2 shows that, across all ten-year age groups between 15 and 64, those participating in the labour force with an activity limitation were much more likely to be unemployed than those without an activity limitation. Within most age groups (including 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54 and 55 to 64), the unemployment rate among persons with an activity limitation was double or more than double that of the non-activity limited population in Hamilton.

Chart 3: Individuals Not In The Labour Force By Age Group And Presence Of An Activity Limitation In Hamilton-Wentworth - 1996 Census Data

Age Group	With Activity Limitation	No Activity Limitation
25 to 54	11,040 (100%)	24,025 (100%)
25 to 34	2,130 (19%)	9,700 (40%)
35 to 44	3,965 (36%)	8,015 (33%)
45 to 54	4,945 (45%)	6,310 (26%)

In order to better understand trends in labour force participation, an analysis was conducted which excluded both the 15 to 24 year age group, as well as the 55 to 64 year age group. These age groups can skew a trends analysis, primarily due to school attendance among 15 to 24 year olds, and retirement among 55 to 64 year olds.
As CHART 3 reveals, the number and proportion of individuals with no activity limitation who are NOT involved in the labour force decreases with successive age groups. The opposite trend occurred among those with an activity limitation, with the number and proportion of individuals increasing with age. What this suggests is that activity

limitations are directly linked to age. This is consistent with findings from other components of this study, which suggest that a large proportion of the target population become disabled as a result of accident or injury or physical or mental health issues that do not present symptoms until later in life.

4.2 Income and Poverty

Issues related to income and poverty can also be investigated through the use of census data. CHART 4 considers average income and rate of poverty by age and activity limitation.

Chart 4: Average Income And Rate Of Poverty (Below Lico) By Age And Activity Limitation In Hamilton-Wentworth (Income Based On 1995 Income) - 1996 Census Data

Age Group	Average Income and Poverty Rate	
	With Activity Limitation	Without Activity Limitation
Ages 15 to 24 yrs.		
Average Income	$11,687	$10,833
Poverty Rate	41%	25%
Ages 25 to 34 yrs.		
Average Income	$17,890	$26,941
Poverty Rate	41%	20%
Ages 35 to 44 yrs.		
Average Income	$21,855	$36,115
Poverty Rate	41%	15%
Ages 45 to 54 yrs.		
Average Income	$21,624	$40,216
Poverty Rate	37%	10%
Ages 55 to 64 yrs.		
Average Income	$18,979	$33,681
Poverty Rate	33%	14%

Two important observations can be made from CHART 4. First, with the exception of the 15 to 24 year age group, the average income among those reporting an activity limitation is substantially lower than those without an activity limitation. Secondly, across all ten-year age groups between 15 and 64, the rate of poverty among those reporting an activity limitation is substantially higher than those without an activity limitation.

4.3 Key Findings

Following is a list of key findings or observations from an analysis of local demographics related to labour force status:

- Across all ten-year age groups between 15 and 64, those reporting an activity limitation have a much lower rate of participation in the labour force than those without an activity limitation.

- In total, among those 15 to 64 who reported an activity limitation, the participation rate was only 40%, compared to 79% among those without activity limitation. This means that 60% or 20,835 individuals with an activity limitation were not participating in the labour force.

- Across all ten-year age groups between 15 and 64, those participating in the labour force with an activity limitation are much more likely to be unemployed than those without an activity limitation

- The proportion of 25 to 54 year olds not in the labour force is more than four times as great among persons reporting an activity limitation

- As age increases, the number of persons with an activity limitation who are not in the labour force also increases. The opposite trend occurs within the non-activity limited population

- With the exception of the 15 to 24 year age group, the average income among those reporting an activity limitation is substantially lower than those without an activity limitation

- Across all ten-year age groups between 15 and 64, the rate of poverty among those reporting an activity limitation is substantially higher than those without an activity limitation

- Of the total number of individuals living in the Hamilton-Wentworth Region who are between the ages of 15 to 64 and report an activity limitation (34,935), 74% live in the city of Hamilton (25,852)

5.0 IDENTIFYING HIDDEN POPULATIONS

This section of the report will allow us to build on findings from the local demographics analysis. For the purposes of this study, the methodology that has been chosen is based on Gail Fawcett's analysis in Living with Disability in Canada. Fawcett uses census and survey data from Statistics Canada to uncover those who she refers to as the "hidden unemployed."

According to Statistics Canada, a person is "unemployed" if they are 15 years of age and over, excluding institutional residents, who, during the week prior to Census Day, were without paid work, and were available for work, and:

d) had actively looked for work in the past four weeks;
e) were on temporary lay-off and expected to return to their job; or
f) had definite arrangements to start a new job in four weeks or less (Statistics Canada, 1996 Census Dictionary).

Ordinarily it might be assumed that only those who are unemployed, or who are actively seeking work for pay or profit, would have a need for, or interest in, the assistance of employment support services. Fawcett's analysis of the "hidden unemployed," however, focuses on those persons with a disability who are "not in the labour force," which, according to the Statistics Canada definition, means that they were neither employed for pay or profit, or "unemployed" according to the definition above. One of the assumptions of Fawcett's analysis, then, is that there is a significant number of persons with a disability who may be willing and able to work, yet who, for one reason or another, have not been actively looking for work.

Fawcett's primary data source is Statistics Canada's 1991 Health and Activity Limitation Survey (HALS). One major problem with any demographic analysis of persons with disabilities in Canada is the lack of up-to-date survey and census data. The HAL survey was not undertaken in 1996 due to federal budget cutbacks. Recently, however, the federal government has made provision for a 2001 HALS, the results of which will likely be available some time in 2003. It is not possible to predict whether figures in the 2001 HALS will be similar to figures collected during the 1991 HALS. Subsequently, the conclusions derived from the most current data sources will yield only a rough estimate of the size of the hidden population of persons with disabilities in Hamilton-Wentworth who are not currently accessing available specialized employment support services, yet who may need, or be interested in, the assistance of such services.

The focus of Fawcett's analysis are persons with an activity limitation, 15 to 64 years of age, who were not in the labour force during the period when the 1991 HAL survey was conducted. Her aim was to determine from the available data, the potential for future labour force participation by looking at obvious indicators of future work potential such as their express intention to look for work in the next six months.

She also considers indicators of environmental barriers that may have prevented or inhibited those in this population from actively seeking work. These indicators of environmental barriers to seeking employment include such factors as fear of losing income support and the experience of past discrimination in the workplace.

According to Fawcett's analysis, the indicators of work potential and environmental barriers, when combined, yield a rough estimate of the proportion of individuals with an activity limitation not in the labour force who showed clear signs of a willingness and ability to work.

Fawcett is careful to point out, however, that "from the available data, it is not possible to accurately determine the full labour market potential of those persons with disabilities who were not participating in the labour force at the time of the survey" (114). Her analysis is not, therefore, meant to imply that those who did not positively respond to any of the indicators of future work potential in the survey are not willing and able to work.

5.1 Willingness and Ability to Work

Following is an overview of what Fawcett refers to as indicators of work potential. Each indicator is analyzed separately, then combined to form a composite measure of employability. This analysis can then be applied to our local analysis, to help us better understand Hamilton's hidden population of persons with disabilities not connected to the labour force.

Volunteer Work

Based on figures from a 1987 survey of volunteer activity in Canada, it is estimated that approximately 20 percent of people with a disability over 15 years of age, and who were not currently in the labour force, were actively employed as volunteers.

Of this group, almost 57 percent reported that the job skills they acquired through volunteer work are skills that might be useful in finding future paid employment.

This means that, nationally, approximately 11 percent of persons with disabilities had developed job skills through their volunteer work that might be transferred to the labour market.

Students
In 1991, nearly 10 percent of people with a disability, who were not in the labour force, were students, most of whom were under the age of 25.

Intention to Seek Paid Employment
In 1991, Approximately 17 percent of people with a disability, who were not in the paid labour force, indicated an intention to seek paid employment within the next six months.

Other Indicators of Work Potential
According to the 1991 HALS data, almost 4 percent of people reporting an activity limitation not currently in the labour force also reported having looked for work in the previous two years, though they had not been employed in the paid labour force for at least five years.

A further 3.4 percent of people with a disability not in the labour force indicated having looked for work in the last five years, yet believed that they were denied employment due to their disability.

A Composite Measure of Potential Employability
There is some overlap among these indicators (such as volunteers or students who indicated the intention to look for work in the next six months). Consequently, Fawcett developed a composite measure of the number of people with disability not in the labour force, yet who showed some sign of work potential, by adding up the number of individuals who gave a positive response to at least one of the indicators. According to the 1991 HALS data, this worked out to almost 31 percent of those individuals with a disability not currently in the labour force.

33 percent of women indicated some sign of work potential compared to 28 percent of men.

Almost 40 percent of persons with mild disabilities indicated some sign of work potential compared to 29 percent of those with moderate disabilities and to 21 percent of those with severe disabilities.

5.2 Environmental Barriers

Following is an overview of what Fawcett refers to as environmental barriers. Each barrier is analyzed separately, then combined to form a composite measure of barriers. Like indicators of work potential, this analysis can then be applied to our local analysis, to

help us better understand Hamilton's hidden population of persons with disabilities not connected to the labour force.

Income and Support Programs
21.4 percent of people with a disability not in the labour force reported that they were not seeking paid employment because they feared losing their income support.

13 percent of people with a disability not in the labour force reported that they were not interested in seeking paid employment because they were afraid of losing disability supports and services (for example, subsidized medication, special transportation services, medical services not covered by basic provincial health care plans, etc.).

Fawcett points out that many individuals who rely on income sources such as social assistance, CPP/QPP disability benefits, Workers' Compensation, or private disability plans have "difficulty re-establishing these benefits if they had found work in the paid labour force, but then lost their job" (Fawcett, "Living with Disability in Canada," 119).

Peer Pressure and Family Responsibilities
Almost 6 percent of individuals with a disability reported having been discouraged from looking for work by family and friends.

Around 10 percent indicated that they had family responsibilities that prevented them from seeking work in the paid labour force. Most of this group were women with children under six years of age.

Discrimination in the Labour Market
According to Fawcett's analysis, 4.8 percent of persons with disabilities reported worrying about being isolated on the job due to their disability. 7.4 percent reported having experienced discrimination on the job.

Job Availability and Training
Approximately 15 percent of persons with disabilities reported that, in their view, there were no jobs available to them. 16.5 percent did not consider their training and skills adequate to finding a job.

A Composite Measure of Environmental Barriers
Nearly 44 percent of all people with a disability not in the labour force reported that at least one environmental barrier prevented them from looking for work.

When combined, these two measures—work potential and environmental barriers—provide an estimate of the number of individuals not in the labour force who may be willing and able to work, and thus who may be interested in seeking employment for pay of profit.

5.3 Hamilton's Hidden Population

In total, Fawcett estimates that approximately 56 percent of people with a disability not in the labour force showed either some sign of work potential, or had experienced environmental barriers to seeking, finding, or retaining a job.

According to 1996 census data, in Hamilton-Wentworth there were 20,835 persons with an activity limitation between 15 and 64 years of age who were not currently in the labour force.

If Fawcett's estimate of the percentage of persons with an activity limitation not in the labour force, yet who showed signs of their willingness and ability to work, is applied to the Hamilton-Wentworth population, we can estimate that, of this group, approximately 11,668 persons may be willing and able to work. This figure represents a rough estimate of the number of persons in Hamilton with an activity limitation who are not in the labour force, but who may be willing and able to work.

If we add to this figure the total number of unemployed persons in Hamilton-Wentworth who have an activity limitation (2,235), then it is possible to arrive at an estimate of the total number of persons with an activity limitation who were not employed, yet who may be willing and able to work, and thus, who may need, or be interested in, the assistance of the specially targeted employment support services available to people with disabilities in Hamilton.

The total figure of those persons in Hamilton with an activity limitation who were not employed, yet who indicated a willingness and ability to work, was 13,903.

5.4 Key Findings

Following is a list of key findings and observations extracted from our analysis of the hidden population of persons with disabilities:

- According to 1991 HALS data, nearly 31 percent of those individuals with a disability not in the labour force showed some sign of work potential.

- Nearly 44 percent of all people not in the labour force reported that at least one environmental barrier prevented them from looking for work.

- Approximately 56 percent of people with a disability not in the labour force showed either some sign of work potential, or had experienced environmental barriers to seeking, finding, or retaining a job.

- According to our local demographics analysis, there are approximately 20,835 individuals between the ages of fifteen and sixty-four with an activity limitation, who, in 1996, were not in the labour force.

- Applying Gail Fawcetts analysis of hidden populations to Hamilton, approximately 11,668 of people with a disability not in the labour force show either some sign of work potential, or had experienced environmental barriers to seeking, finding, or retaining a job.

- Including the number of individuals between the ages of fifteen and sixty-four with an activity limitation who were unemployed at the time of the 1996 census, the number of individuals who may have benefited from employment support services was approximately 13,903.

6.0 WORKABLE SURVEY FINDINGS

As part of our approach to understanding the hidden population, a survey was conducted through Workable Services Inc. Surveys were completed over a four month period by individuals considered to have a disability, who were applying for employment through Workable. The survey, completed by a total of forty-one (41) individuals, provided useful information related to the characteristics of the unemployed disabled population.

Specifically, the survey identified the nature and cause of the respondents disability (i.e. a result of an accident or injury, a disability from birth, or a disability that appeared later in life); education levels; work history; experience with employment support services; barriers to employment and participation in employment support services, and; general approaches to job search.

It should be noted that the survey was completed by individuals who would be considered, based on Statistics Canada definitions, to be in the labour force but (in most cases) unemployed. The limitation of survey findings then, is that they do not necessarily represent the characteristics of individual who, for whatever reason, may not be actively seeking employment. Following is an overview of survey findings.

6.1 Causes of Disabilities

Survey respondents were asked to identify the cause of their disability under one of three options; a result of an accident or injury, a disability from birth, or a disability that appeared later in life.

Forty individuals responded to this question. Twenty-three percent (23%) of respondents identified their disability as a result of an accident or injury, twenty-three percent (23%) reported a disability from birth, and fifty-five percent (55%) reported a disability that appeared later in life. The majority of respondents reporting a disability later in life identified mental health issues as their primary disability.

By combining the first and third categories, we see that seventy-eight percent of respondents (78%) would not have been considered disabled until an accident or onset of a disease or disorder. This may have implications in terms of the provision and marketing of employment support services. Under work history, ninety-six percent of respondents reported having paid employment in the past.

This seems to suggests that a large proportion of the disabled population may require retraining and support in reconnecting with the labour market under different

circumstances. As evidenced in the literature and findings from key informant interviews, individuals under these circumstances may not identify themselves as disabled and, consequently, may not see themselves as candidates for employment support services.

6.2 Level Of Education

Survey respondents were provided with a range of options denoting education levels, from "grade school or less" to "postgraduate" education. Out of forty-one respondents, seven percent (7%) of respondents identified "grade school or less"; twenty-two percent (22%) reported "some high school" ; thirty-seven percent (37%) had "graduated high school"; fourteen percent (14%) reported "some college or university", and; twenty percent (20%) had "graduated college or university".

6.3 Employment History

In terms of employment history, ninety-six percent (96%) of respondents reported having been involved in paid employment in the past. When asked the end date of their last paid position, fifty-nine percent (59%) reported between two and twelve months; thirty-one percent (31%) reported between two and four years, and; nine percent reported that their last paid work experience was between ten and eleven years ago.

With respect to types or fields of employment, fifty-five percent (55%) of respondents identified "labour/trades/transportation" as their last position held. The second most frequently identified field of employment was "other professional or technical" at twenty-two percent (22%), then "office/clerical" at eleven percent (11%).

6.4 Use of Employment Support Services

The survey defined employment support programs as involving "activities such as skills training, career planning, resume writing, job search training, job coaching, or other programs aimed at helping people to get back in to the workforce". When asked if they had ever participated in an employment support program, fifty-eight percent (58%) reported that they had.

Respondents were also asked to identify any barrier they perceived in terms of accessing employment services. The survey identified several potential barriers, as well as the option to identify barriers not included on the list provided. Respondents were simply asked to identify as many barriers as they felt applied to them.

The barrier most often identified by the forty-one (41) survey respondents was "lack of information about programs and services". Lack of information was identified by twenty-nine percent (29%) of respondents.

The second most often identified barrier was "transportation". This was identified as a barrier by twenty-four percent (24%) of respondents. In terms of barriers to accessing employment services identified by key informants as well as through a literature review, issues around transportation and information also figured prominently.

6.5 Barriers to Finding Work

The same method used to understand perceived barriers to accessing employment support services was used to identify barriers to finding work. The survey identified several potential barriers, as well as the option to identify barriers not included on the list provided. Respondents were again asked to identify as many barriers as they felt applied to them in terms of finding work.

The issue of "transportation" was most often perceived as a barrier to finding work, identified by forty-six percent of respondents (46%). The next most often identified barrier was "lack of experience", identified by forty-four percent (44%) of respondents, the "level of education" which was identified by thirty-seven percent (37%).

6.6 Key Findings

Following is a list of key findings and observations extracted from an analysis of a survey of Workable Services clients:

- Considering causes of disabilities, more than half of the survey respondents (55%) reported that their disability appeared later in life, and 23% identified an accident or injury as the cause. This means that 78% of those interviewed were not born with an apparent disability.

- Over seventy (70) percent of respondents in the survey reported having graduated from high school.

- Ninety-six (96) percent of survey respondents reported having paid employment in the past. Jobs in "labour/trades/transportation" were identified as the last position held by a majority of these respondents (55%).

- A majority of respondents (58%) reported that they had participated in an employment support program.

- The most significant barrier to accessing employment support services for survey respondents was "lack of information about programs and services." The second most significant barrier identified was transportation.

- "Transportation" was identified by forty-six (46) percent of survey respondents as a barrier to finding a job. Lack of experience and level of education were also identified by more than a third of respondents as barriers to finding paid employment.

7.0 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS - SERVICE PROVIDERS

As part of the process of understanding local issues facing persons with disabilities, a series of consultations were held in the form of key informant interviews. One-on-one interviews were conducted with five local professionals with involvement in the field of disabilities. Specifically, our key informants had expertise in the fields of physical rehabilitation, home care services, employment support services, special education and information/referral services for persons with disabilities.

Through a method known as thematic analysis, information collected through the interview process was organized in to theme areas or issues consistently identified by key informants. Following is an overview and discussion of specific themes, which emerged through this process.

7.1 Availability of Information

Key informants identified the lack of information about specialized employment services as a problem. Agencies and individuals who work with the disabled population in non-employment related settings are in a position to make referrals or provide information to their clients, however, they do not know enough about the services available.

While it was pointed out that this work is not necessarily part of their job, they do need to be familiar with the options that are available to their clients. Health care providers, for example, may have no immediate interest in becoming familiar with community resources related to employment. Providing this information to health care providers, and other non-employment-related agencies that deal with people with disabilities, could increase the availability of information about employment support services that are available in our community.

Another issue raised by key informants concerned the language that is used to promote specialized employment services to people with disabilities. People with disabilities will not necessarily identify themselves as having a disability, in particular those with "invisible" disabilities such as mental health issues.

It was suggested that specialized employment services need to be promoted carefully. People who might use these services may avoid them, if it necessary for them to walk under a big sign that reads "Mental Health Services" for example. Further, people with disabilities do not necessarily want to be reminded of their disability every time they open a newspaper or pass by a covered bus stop. When these services are promoted, sensitivity

to these issues, and an understanding of the full range of disabilities including mental health issues, will be necessary to encourage the people who need these services to use them.

Information about specialized employment support services is not readily available to some is because the format in which the information is presented is inaccessible to them. This may be directly connected with a person's particular impairment. So, for example, if a person is visually impaired they may require the information in big print or in Braille if it is to be accessible to them.

The reason why information may be inaccessible to a person, however, may have nothing to do with their particular disability. If a person has trouble reading, they may require the information to be presented in audio or video format for it to be accessible to them. Similarly, people whose first language is not English may not be able to readily access information about these services unless it is presented to them in their primary language.

7.2 Transportation

Inconsistency in the delivery of transportation services to persons with disabilities can make it very difficult to arrive at work on time everyday, which in most jobs is expected of all employees. Inadequate transportation services therefore can put people with disabilities at a disadvantage in comparison with their fellow employees, and could result in dismissal. Not only is the inadequacy of transportation services for people with disabilities detrimental to the employee, but it may put the employer in a bad position, even if in other respects the employer has been supportive and accommodating.

It was identified that the proportion of persons with a disability who are low income is much higher than in the general population. Those on a tightly limited income may be further limited in their transportation options. They may not be able to afford the costs associated with owning their own vehicle, and they may not be able to afford a taxicab to and from work each day. Other persons with a disability may be able to afford their own vehicle, but may not be able to get a driver's license due to their disability.

7.3 Specially Targeted Employment Services

Specially targeted employment services that currently exist in the community need to better understand the broad range of disability types. Many persons with a disability, especially those with mental health problems, do not identify themselves as being disabled. This may in part explain why employment supports and services appear to favor people with physical disabilities rather than developmental or psychological disabilities.

Key informants felt that many people using the specialized employment services experience recidivism. That is, persons using these services are periodically returning to utilize these services because, for whatever reason, their employment placements have not worked out.

One of these key informants mentioned that the same people seem to keep having a need to access the system. Another interviewee suggested that persons with multiple disabilities seem to be the most susceptible to the revolving door phenomenon. One explanation given was that the available employment services are not doing a good job matching their clients with employment opportunities. Another possible explanation of this "revolving door" phenomenon might be that, even if well placed, employers are not adequately educated, or do not receive the supports necessary to adequately accommodate their disabled employees.

There was agreement among key informants that many of the services for persons with disabilities are bureaucratic and impersonal. It was mentioned that the application process for some of the services is very negative and very intrusive, and that as a result some people will not apply because they find the application process humiliating. It was suggested that the service agencies should try to provide more personalized kinds of service.

ContAct Hamilton-Wentworth was mentioned by a number of key informants. It was stated that this new model of service delivery in Hamilton was swamped with requests, and that demand for their services has quickly outstripped available resources. Key informants also noted that as a result of the unexpected volume of requests for service that case managers have been overwhelmed, and that waiting lists are, as one key informant put it, "horrendous."

A further problem that was identified by key informants is that some people who may be interested in using the services are unable to because of restrictive eligibility requirements.

Another issue that was raised by key informants was that stakeholders, namely persons with disabilities, have little decision-making capacity regarding the services they use.

7.4 Training and Education

Training and education are a major issue for many persons with a disability. Key informants reported that often the level of training is inadequate for the employment opportunities in which persons with disabilities are placed.

It was further suggested that training programs available through the existing specially targeted employment services are too short and focus only on basic skills rather than the more advanced skills that are required by meaningful and fulfilling work opportunities. One key informant stated that we cannot send everybody to computer school; it is not always appropriate. She suggested that maybe they have skills in other areas that may be developed.

7.5 Government Policy

Rates of income support for persons with a disability are often inadequate. Costs associated with having a disability can be very high. As in the general population, low income is a barrier to finding meaningful employment, and getting the education and training a person needs to be in a position to apply for meaningful work opportunities.

Another major problem that was identified is that many persons receiving financial assistance or benefits through government programs are not willing to work because of the reasonable expectation that their benefits will be cut off if they take a job without any assurance that these benefits will be restored if, for whatever reason, the job does not work out.

Some persons with a disability, those with a mental health problem for example, may not be able to work full-time, but they may be willing and able to work part-time. If they take a part-time job, however, it is not likely that they will make enough to adequately support themselves, yet they will lose their benefits. People with a disability who are receiving assistance or benefits through government programs are thus discouraged from working. Further, more and more entry-level jobs in various professions are contract jobs. Why, however, would a person give up financial support provided to them through government programs to take a short-term contract position without any assurances that their contract will be renewed, or that their benefits will be restored if there contract is not renewed? Again, current government policy was viewed as discouraging people with a disability and who are receiving benefits, from pursuing employment opportunities.

7.6 Employer Attitudes

According to a number of key informants, employers are not adequately educated as to what is needed to accommodate a worker with a disability. A common theme was that employers, like many other people, harbour misconceptions about what a person with a disability can or cannot do. They may be unwilling to hire a person who is known to have a disability because they believe that (a) persons with a disability cannot be as productive as

persons who do not have a disability, that (b) accommodating persons with a disability will require them to make expenditures or concessions that they may not be able to afford, or that (c) they may be liable to legal action on the grounds of discrimination if the employee does not work out and must be let go. The widespread existence of such misconceptions suggests the need for an education campaign that would target employers as well as the public generally.

On the other hand, key informants indicated that in many cases employers are very supportive of their disabled employees.

7.7 The Hidden Population

People with acquired brain injuries and developmental or cognitive disabilities are difficult to place, and otherwise have difficulty finding work. Available employment is mostly for people with physical disabilities. As mentioned in the section of Employment Support Services, many of these services are designed for, and directed towards, people with visible physical disabilities.

In the public school system, students with developmental disabilities are not getting any of the coop or work placements, and suggested that this group constitutes a hidden population. The perception was that there are more barriers standing in the way of a person with cognitive disabilities than for others. Another key informant stated that people with mild disabilities are "falling through the cracks."

According to one key informant, those with marketable skills are skimmed off the top, and employers do not find that it takes much energy to accommodate these people. Many others, she pointed out, have given up looking for work, and "simply accept that a pension is all that they will be able to get."

7.8 Other Issues

A further issue identified by key informants was that many persons with disabilities experience social isolation, and are therefore not in a good position to access employment opportunities or employment services.

Low self-esteem can be a problem for some people with disabilities if they lack confidence in their ability to work, or have doubts that they can find a job with which they will be comfortable, and which they will enjoy.

In discussions of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, self-employment, or working for profit rather than pay, is often neglected. It may be a benefit to many persons with a disability to be able to work out of their homes. They could thus avoid transportation and accessibility problems that are commonly experienced by those who must travel to work.

7.9 Key Findings

Following is a list of key findings and observations extracted from key informant interviews with local professionals who with involvement in the field of disabilities:

- Key informants believed that many individuals find themselves repeatedly returning to use employment support services because, for whatever reason, their employment placements have not worked out.

- Key informants perceived many of the services for individuals with a disability to be too bureaucratic, and need to be more personalized. Individuals with a disability should also have more decision-making capacity regarding the services that they use.

- Key informants suggested that the level of training provided by local employment support services is often inadequate for the jobs in which individuals are placed.

- Rates of income support are often inadequate, making it difficult for individuals for individuals to find meaningful employment.

- There was a sense that government policy around income support for individuals with a disability, coupled with the fear of losing benefits on the part of recipients, discourages those individuals from seeking employment.

- Key informants believed that most employers are not adequately educated as to what is needed to accommodate a worker with a disability.

- There was a perception among key informants that individuals with mild, episodic, and developmental or cognitive disabilities have more difficulty accessing employment support services than do people with obvious physical impairments.

- Many individuals with a disability experience social isolation and low self-esteem.

8.0 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS - POTENTIAL CONSUMERS

As part of the process of understanding local issues facing persons with disabilities, a series of consultations were held in the form of key informant interviews. One-on-one interviews were conducted with fourteen individuals identified as having one or more disabilities.

Given the range of levels and types of disabilities makes it difficult to establish a true representative sample. In efforts to increase the validity of findings however, a number of characteristics were considered in selecting key informants. In terms of gender, our sample of fourteen included six males and eight females. Key informants also had a range of disability types, including multiple disabilities. These disabilities were either visible (such as cerebral palsy) or invisible (such as depression).

Through a method known as thematic analysis, information collected through the interview process was organized in to theme areas or issues consistently identified by key informants. Following is a overview and discussion of specific themes which emerged through this process.

8.1 Lack of Information on Employment Supports

Consistent with findings from other sources, the majority of key informants claimed that they did not have enough information about employment support services available to them. There was agreement that information on all local programs should be readily available, so that individuals could choose a program that was right for them.

When asked how they currently receive information related to employment support programs, many respondents identified informal sources. Specifically, respondents identified family and friends, the hospital, and other people with disabilities as sources of information.

Key informants discussed options in terms of sources of disseminating information about employment supports services to those who might use them. A number of suggestions were made, including presentations at high schools and colleges, to health care providers, adult education programs, and to disability support groups; mail-outs; media advertising, including radio, television and newspapers, and; the creation of a resource list which could be widely distributed.

8.2 Transportation

In general, our sample of key informants were not experiencing overwhelming issues with respect to transportation. In fact, the majority of respondents reported using public transportation with no problems. Issues of low income were however seen as an issue affecting ones ability to afford public transportation.

In terms of employability, it was identified that some jobs require a vehicle. This was seen as a financial issue, where individuals with limited income were unable to afford a vehicle.

8.3 Barriers to Accessing Employment Support Services

Personal issues were most often identified as barriers to participating in employment support programs, citing anxiety and nervousness.

A second barrier related to financial issues. Key informants felt that expenses sometimes associated with participating in employment programs (i.e. Transportation to and from, meals, clothing, child-care) were prohibitive.

8.4 Discrimination

While most key informants reported experiencing some form of discrimination in finding employment, two of these respondents suggested that this discrimination was not disability related, but was based on ethnicity. There was a sense that there was more pressure on them to "prove themselves" to employers.

8.5 Key Findings

Following is a list of key findings and observations based on themes, which emerged during key informant interviews with consumers and potential consumers of employment services:

- The majority of key informants claimed that they did not have enough information about employment support services available to them.

- In general, our sample of key informants were not experiencing overwhelming issues with respect to transportation.

- Key informants felt that expenses sometimes associated with participating in employment programs (i.e. Transportation to and from, meals, clothing, child-care) were prohibitive.

- There was a sense among key informants that there was more pressure on them to "prove themselves" to employers.

9.0 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Following is a summary and discussion of key findings from each component of the study. Specific components include the literature review, demographics analysis, analysis of hidden populations, findings from the survey of Workable clients, and key informant interviews with local professionals and potential consumers of employment support services. Our intention, through a synthesis and analysis of findings from all sources of information used in this study, is to identify consistencies in trends, opinions and perspectives which support a set of recommendations toward positive change.

The result of this analysis was the identification of five specific themes or issues of concern. These themes or issues include: The dissemination of information on employment support opportunities; transition for persons leaving and reentering financial support systems; general awareness of disability issues and supports among employers, persons with disabilities who may qualify and benefit from supports, service providers and the general public; transportation issues affecting participation in the labour force and employment support programs and services, and; the need to ensure the provision of appropriate employment support services, which represent the interests and expectations of consumers, employers, service providers and labour market demands.

Following is a discussion of findings related to each of the five themes identified above:

9.1 Information on Employment Support Programs and Services

Ineffective methods of disseminating information on available employment support programs and services was a reoccurring theme throughout the course of the study. According to a review of literature incorporating local, provincial and national level studies, this is also an issue in other jurisdictions.
According to respondents of the survey conducted with Workable clients, a "lack of information about programs and services" was the most significant barrier to access and participation. Key informant interviews with potential consumers of employment support services revealed that much of the information on employment support services was received through informal sources. These sources include family and friends, hospitals, and other people with disabilities.

Local professionals with involvement in the field of disabilities also viewed the lack of an effective system of disseminating information on support opportunities as an issue for persons with disabilities. Key informants suggested that those who work with the disabled population in non-employment related settings are in a good position to make referrals or

provide information to their clients, however, they do not know enough about available services.

Other issues related to the dissemination of information were related to the medium or format, as well as the language and terms used in the promotion of employment services. Information needs to be accessible to all people, regardless of literacy level, language barriers, and type of disability. In terms of promoting services, it was suggested that significant proportion of persons who might qualify for employment support services would not identify themselves as having a disability. Services then, should be promoted with sensitivity to these issues.

9.2 Leaving and Reentering Income Support Programs

The issue of financial disincentives related to leaving and reentering income support systems represents another theme that emerged through the course of our research. Our review of related literature identified two specific issues, including: 1) the difficulty of moving between employment and income support, and 2) the adequacy of employment income in meeting day-to-day needs, as well as special needs related to a disability. Concerns around disincentives related to moving from financial assistance to employment were also echoed by key informants (professionals). Those interviewed suggested that many people receiving financial assistance are not willing to work because of "the reasonable expectation that their benefits will be cut off if they take a job, without ant assurance that these benefits will be restored if, for whatever reason, the job does not work out".

While recent changes to policies governing the transition to and from financial assistance (specifically ODSP) address and eliminate many of these risks, our study shows that these fears still exist. As a result, persons with disabilities will continue to feel discouraged from venturing in to the labour force.

9.3 General Awareness of Disability Issues Related to Employment

The affects of attitudes and misconceptions related to the employability of persons with disabilities emerged as a theme throughout the course of our research. According to our findings, some of the attitudes held by employers, service providers as well persons with disabilities themselves, create barriers to accessing employment and employment support services.

According to our key informants (professionals), many employers (as well as the general public) hold misconceptions about what a person with disabilities can or cannot do.

Employers may be unwilling to hire a person with a disability because they believe that they may be less productive or require expensive modifications to the workplace.

While speaking with potential consumers of employment services, many individuals who would qualify and perhaps benefit from employment supports did not consider themselves to be "disabled". This seems to be most common among those with "invisible disabilities" (such as some cognitive, mental and physical health issues), who may require some flexibility in their employment situation. The implications here are twofold; these individuals may not avail themselves to support services marketed to the "disabled population", and employers may not be sensitive to their needs if they do not reveal any limitations.

Misconceptions around what constitutes a "disability" create further confusion around "successful outcomes" in terms of employment. For example, if an individual is capable of part-time but not full-time employment, then finding a part-time position should be considered a success for that individual.

To dispel these misconceptions, efforts should be made to raise awareness among service providers, employers and persons with disabilities around the full range of disability types and levels, as well as the range of successful outcomes in terms of securing employment.

9.4 Transportation

When we think about transportation issues facing persons with disabilities, we often focus on those persons with severe mobility problems, who require door-to-door transportation service. In terms of barriers to accessing employment and employment support services, the literature identifies these types of transportation systems as generally "inconsistent" and "unreliable". This was echoed by key informants (professionals), who suggested that inadequate transportation services can put people with disabilities at a disadvantage in relation to their coworkers.

Specialized transportation services however, may not be the only transportation issue facing persons with disabilities. As part of the Workable survey, respondents were asked to identify specific barriers to finding work. Of the forty-one respondents, most of whom did not suffer a mobility impairment, forty-six percent identified transportation as a barrier. This seems consistent with the experiences of persons without disabilities, but who are financially disadvantaged, and who rely on public transportation. In a study of Ontario Works recipients, forty-eight percent of respondents (T= 335) identified transportation as a barrier to employment.

While it still important to improve the reliability of specialized door-to-door services, we should also consider the adequacy of public transportation in Hamilton. Our findings suggest that there may be issues around routing, where existing bus routes are not consistent with the locations of employment opportunities.

9.5 Ongoing Evaluation of the Employment Support Service Delivery System

While a formal evaluation of specific employment support programs and services was beyond the scope of this study, key informants (professionals) had some concerns around the types of services provided locally, how programs and services are marketed, and how individuals are connected to employment opportunities.

As with any service delivery system, it is important to integrate an ongoing process of monitoring or evaluating the consistency of expectations held by employers, service providers, and consumers of employment support services. The expectations of these groups should also be tested or considered in the context of current labour market demand.

10.0 RECCOMENDATIONS

This section of the report builds on our summary and discussion of key findings. A set of recommendations has been developed which relates to the themes and issues identified through a synthesis of key findings from each section of the report.

Whereas findings suggest that the current system of disseminating information about employment support service and program opportunities is ineffective, it is recommended:

- That an effective system of disseminating information on employment support services and programs be developed, which is accessible to, and inclusive of persons with a broad range of disability levels and types.

- That individuals and organizations which support the disabled population in non-employment related settings be encouraged to view employment as a quality of life issue for their clients, and take responsibility for supporting their clients by conveying information about employment support opportunities.

Whereas a lack of awareness of the full range of disability types and levels among employers, service providers, persons with disabilities and the general public has created misconceptions related to employability and successful employment outcomes for persons with disabilities, it is recommended:

- That an approach to raising awareness of the potential benefits of employment supports be developed, with a specific focus on persons with mild or invisible disabilities who may not see themselves as disabled.

- That an approach to raising awareness of the full range of disability levels and types be developed, which targets employers, service providers and the general public.

- That an approach to raising awareness around the range of successful employment outcomes for persons with disabilities be developed, which targets employers, service providers, persons with disabilities and the general public.

Whereas recent policy changes which serve to minimize or eliminate many of the financial risks involved in leaving ODSP income support for employment have not affected the perceptions and fears held by ODSP recipients, we recommend:

- That an approach to raising awareness of new ODSP policies be developed, which targets service providers, employers, persons with disabilities, and the general public.

- That efforts be made to encourage ODSP income support recipients to test their skills in the labour force, without fear of losing income supports permanently.

Whereas research findings suggest that transportation, as a barrier to employment, may be a result of inconsistencies between the locations of employment opportunities and the routing of public transportation, it is recommended:

- That further investigation of exiting HSR bus routes be conducted, in efforts to understand the impact of current routing on the employability of persons relying on public transportation

Whereas successful support service systems require ongoing assessment of the needs and expectations of all stakeholder groups in the context of a constantly changing external environment, it is recommended:

- That an ongoing evaluation of the employment support service system be conducted, to identify trends and assess the consistency between consumer and employer expectations, labour market demand, and existing employment support programs.

APPENDISIES

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3. Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on State Systems and Employment. Oct.1998 -Oct.2003. Children's Hospital, Institute for Community Inclusion. Boston, MA.
- Study examines coordinated employment efforts.

4. American Indian Rehabilitation Research and Training Center. Oct.1998-Oct.2003. Northern Arizona University. Flagstaff, AZ.
- Study looks at improving, planning and evaluating employment services for American Indians and Alaska Natives with disabilities on or off reservations.

5. Policy Barriers for People with Long Term Mental Illness Who Want to Work. May 1998-May 2001. National Rehabilitation Hospital Research Center. Washington, D.C.
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- Study identifies training needs and barriers to employment and possible resolutions. Boston. Washington., D.C.

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